

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE ATTACK AND DEFENCE OF COAST FORTIFICATIONS. By Captain EDWARD MAGUIRE, Corps of Engineers, U.S.A. \$200 pp. 124. D. Van Nostrand.

Captain Maguire's treatise will be acceptable to professional students for this especial reason, among others, that it is based almost entirely upon the new methods of naval armament and fortification which have been introduced by the inventions of the past few years. It discards a vast mass of theoretical instruction which has now only an historical value, and takes account only of the most improved modern guns, and the latest devices for resisting and counteracting them. In the list of defensive contrivances are included of course torpedoes, submarine mines and harbour obstructions. The lessons of the most recent experience, down to the bombardment of Alexandria, are carefully considered, and intelligent use is made of the latest foreign authorities. The book will have a painful interest for civilian readers in this country, because, without directly complaining of the policy of our Government, it shows how utterly helpless we are, either for the attack of an enemy or the defence of our coasts, and how vain is the confidence which many of us are blindly placing in such safeguards as mines and torpedoes in case of emergency. These inventions, as Captain Maguire demonstrates, are extremely uncertain in their working, and the results can only be auxiliary to heavy coast fortifications. They may delay the approach of a fleet and thus serve an important end, by keeping it under the fire of shore guns; but alone it is impossible for them to defeat a determined attack. As he expresses it, they have only one life. Having once been exploded in action, they cannot be replaced; and a brave and energetic commander will not hesitate to sacrifice a ship or two, if necessary, in order to open a gap in the defender's lines.

John Jasper, as most people know, is the colored preacher who has undertaken to upset and demolish the biocentric theory by biblical quotations. Somebody would like to believe in his theory that "the sun do move," has written a life of him. (Richmond; R. T. Hill & Co.) It is a curious, fragmentary, inconsequent piece of work, and like the utterances of its hero, it shows very plainly the need of more common schools at the South. John Jasper was a slave until the emancipation. He never had any education beyond five or six months' wrestling with a spelling-book, according to his own account, and certainly there is nothing in his doings or sayings to suggest doubt as to the entire truthfulness of his statement on this head. His position on the "rotation of the sun" was not the result of any independent reflection on his part, but grew out of a casual reference to the Bible, as it appears, prompted by a dispute between two of his acquaintances or members of his congregation. He was asked to preach a sermon explaining the matter, and in response he prepared the by means of remarkable effort, various synopses of which have been printed under the title "The Sun Do Move." In the prospectus of this book it is stated that this sermon appears in it "in full," but that is not the case. What appears is several more or less scrapes reports of the said sermon. His biographer credits Jasper with eloquence, but there is no slight suggestion of it in any of the remarks here cited from his discourses. His absurd ignorance and dogmatism naturally excited a good deal of amusement at first, and a great many white people went to hear him preach about the sun, and several cranks told him he was wise man, and he seems to have accepted that view of himself quite readily. But, in fact, his arguments are such as only could have occurred to the most densely ignorant person, and there is no ingenuity or originality about them. The poor old man has doubtless been made a butt by the majority of those who have professed interest in him and respect for his vagaries, and this is a pity, for it seems to have been the means of convincing many cultured people that he is right. Of course there is nothing wonderful in such an exhibition of stupidity on the part of a poor fellow who was a slave until mid-life, but it is melancholy to find an attempt being made to obtain for the evidence of his opinions as a teacher of secular science at least recognition as proof of his eminence. No doubt there are two ways of looking at such cases. They may be regarded simply and solely as food for mirth, and dismissed with peremptory. But the spectacle of ignorance glorifying in its benighted condition, and mistaking its darkness for light, is hardly a fit subject for jest, to such as take life seriously, and this sober endeavor to secure a niche in the Temple of Fame for John Jasper does not seem to us much comical as depressing.

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